

TONY GONZALES
23RD DISTRICT, TEXAS

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VICE CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM,
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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March 14, 2023

The Honorable Anthony Blinken, Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

The United States has long ignored the rising violence engulfing our southern neighbor and the consequences it bears on the American people. Criminal cartel syndicates have never been as powerful as they are today; wreaking havoc with complete immunity in Mexico, killing millions of Americans through the trafficking of drugs like fentanyl into our cities and communities, and bringing violent crime to our streets spurred by their illicit activities. These trends make it clear that the United States must take a more proactive approach in addressing this issue at its root. Americans are being killed and kidnapped by cartels alongside thousands of Mexican citizens. The Mexican government has shown itself unwilling to take sufficient actions to stem this crisis in turn, placing Americans directly in harm's way. Mexican cartels act without fear of repercussions or accountability. The United States must act to change this disturbing reality.

Currently, 550 Americans are reported missing in Mexico. Only two weeks ago, four Americans were kidnapped by the Gulf Cartel in broad daylight in Matamoros, just across the border from Brownsville, Texas, of whom two were killed. This weekend it was also reported that three more Americans are missing in Mexico: Maritza Trinidad Perez Rios, her sister Marina Perez Rios, and their friend Dora Alicia Cervantes Saenz, none of whom have been heard from in nearly three weeks. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is currently investigating their disappearance. While I sincerely hope their investigation leads to the safe and timely return of these Americans, it will not return the hundreds of other missing Americans. The U.S. government has an obligation to make every effort to return home those who have been unjustly taken against their will abroad, and it is clear our current efforts are insufficient for meeting this commitment.

Therefore, I would like your responses to the following questions:

- What actions is the State Department currently taking to find Maritza Trinidad Perez Rios, Marina Perez Rios, and Dora Alicia Cervantes Saenz?
- What is the extent of cooperation by the Mexican government in assisting U.S. authorities searching for Americans reported missing in Mexico?
- Does the State Department support the designation of Mexican cartels as foreign terrorist organizations?

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- What actions is the State Department taking to crack down on rising cartel activity?
- What actions is the State Department taking to improve U.S.-Mexico border safety?

Please provide a written response to these questions no later than **March 24th, 2023**. My office stands ready to assist you on any of the aforementioned issues.

Thank you for your assistance and consideration,

Sincerely,

Tony Gonzales
U.S. Representative
23rd Congressional District of Texas

Cc: The Honorable Ken Salazar, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico
U.S. Department of State
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06500 CDMX